

Meeting Your Other Half's Mother by Carerra_os

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Summary:

Day 30 Lily of the Valley

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Billy's hands sweat around the little bouquet he is holding, he picked it out special for Steve, the bundle of small bell shaped white flowers and waxy thick green leaves binding them together holding a secret meaning for Billy. The woman looks over him with a critical eyes taking in his half buttoned up shirt, scars peeking out of the open v, jeans worn and frayed at the knees, his shorter than before curls, finally really starting to grow out instead of staying coiled tight and puffy, for six months he looked like he could be Dustin's bother to both their chagrin. Billy gulps at the unmoving look, worried that the woman is going to slam the doors in his face Billy finally speaks "Is Steve here?" moving the bouquet up and down mechanically in his nervousness.

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Author's Note:

Day Thirty Lily of the Valley from the Harringrove
April Prompts

Meeting Your Other Half's Mother

Billy has nerves in his belly as he rings Steve's doorbell at half past seven, eyes flicking to the unfamiliar car in the driveway next to Steve's that Billy has never seen before. Worrying that Steve has changed his mind about tonight, about giving Billy a real chance past messy late night make outs and heavy petting. Worried that this is all some ruse to mock him, that Steve already has a date waiting to return the favor of smashing Billy's face in the way Billy had to Steve almost two years ago.

The doors open and it is an older woman standing there silhouetted by the overhead light in the little entryway. Billy's heart rate ticks up with a different set of nerves, she looks familiar, she looks like Steve, a similar speckling of moles, the same nose. Shit this is worse than if Steve did have an ulterior motive to get Billy back for that time he beat him up. Billy is not prepared to meet Steve's mother, oh god he really hopes his father is not home as well.

Billy's hands sweat around the little bouquet he is holding, he picked it out special for Steve, the bundle of small bell shaped white flowers and waxy thick green leaves binding them together holding a secret meaning for Billy. The woman looks over him with a critical eyes taking in his half buttoned up shirt, scars peeking out of the open v, jeans worn and frayed at the knees, his shorter than before curls, finally really starting to grow out instead of staying coiled tight and puffy, for six months he looked like he could be Dustin's bother to

both their chagrin. Billy gulps at the unmoving look, worried that the woman is going to slam the doors in his face Billy finally speaks "Is Steve here?" moving the bouquet up and down mechanically in his nervousness.

"Steve isn't ready yet, why don't you come in?" She says moving to only block one of the doors, arm dropping and spanning inside a gesture for Billy to move. He holds the flowers against his stomach, petals brushing against his scared chest, as he stomps his boots on the little bristle rug before moving inside, wishing he had taken Robin's suggestion of better shoes more seriously, his scuffed worn boots feeling out of place.

"You are Billy, yes?" She asks with just a hint of an accent as she closes the door and Billy suddenly feels trapped, like he needs to escape all of his buttons and break through a window if he wants to breathe again. He manages a curt nod, speech failing him, fingers going too tight on the leaf wrapped steams making them crunch together. Even the small smile that pulls at her painted lips does nothing to dim his nerves.

"I'm sure he will be down shortly, why don't you join me in the parlor room, take off your shoes, these carpets are imported." It is not actually a question, she is already moving into the living room before Billy can get his wits about him. He quickly toes off his boots, nearly falling when the left one gets caught, the laces not loose enough and he ends up having to bend down and angrily pull at the laces until they loosen.

Billy's hands go back to clutching the little bouquet as he finally pads into the living room glad he made it a point to check his socks before he pulled on his shoes, the last thing he needs is a hole in the toe when meeting Steve's mother. Mrs. Harrington watches him standing

by the mantel looking elegant in her floor length dress, she does not look like she should be in little Hawkins, she looks like she should be in some city people talk about with awe and Billy can see where Steve gets it from. Sometimes when it is just the two of them and Steve is all pretty and outlined by moonlight telling Billy the dumbest thing he has ever heard he gets a little struck by how out of place Steve is, how he belongs someplace bigger, where more than just Billy and some kids can realize his real worth.

She flares her hand out like she is a model on Wheel of Fortune and the couch is one of the letters she is revealing. Billy stands there for a moment blinking at it, a little surprised when it does not rotate to reveal his fortune. It remains stationary, plain, a dark buttery soft leather that Billy worries he is somehow going to ruin as he shuffles closer taking a seat by the arm, unlike his normal stance Billy keeps his limbs in, does not spread out and take up as much space as possible, keeps his posture straight and proper. He is positive he is being judged, a thought confirmed by the way Mrs. Harrington gives a small subtle nod like he has done well thus far, it makes the sweat of his palms worse.

“How long have you known my Steven?” She asks, dress trailing lightly behind her as she moves to the little bar in the corner.

Billy licks over his lips thinking and worrying about what Steve has told her. Should he count from when he moved to Hawkins, or when they actually got to know each other after Starcourt when Billy was in the hospital and he actually apologized and they started spending time together? Billy watches Mrs. Harrington almost disappears behind the bar before popping back up with a can of cheap beer, the kind of beer Steve knows Billy drinks and there is something warm in his belly at the idea that Steve put it there with him in mind. “Almost two years.” He chooses the hospital apology, it is what Billy likes to count by.

She hums, manicured nails, painted a deep red pop the can open, she grabs a fancy glass, tilting it so that as she pours it the amber liquid hits the edge of it before sliding down into the cylinder, keeping it from being overly foamy. The glass looks expensive, tiny rainbows casting off of it and Billy realizes it is crystals, she pouring a pabst into crystal and Billy has a panic that it will somehow taint the glass, the same way he sometimes worries that he is tainting Steve, rendering him imperfect. His hands tighten on his bouquet again, the little bell shaped flowers shaking as he grinds the steams together.

“Perhaps you should put the flowers down before you damage them.” Mrs. Harrington calls, as she pours a deep burgundy wine from what looks like a vase into a delicate wine glass. Billy hesitates, what is he supposed to do with his hands if he is not holding them, he has forgotten how to act smooth and charming with the moms of Hawkins, that went out the window the first time Steve sent a genuine smile his way. He doubts any of his old tricks would work on Mrs. Harrington anyhow, she is probably used to better flattery and pageantry than Billy has ever been able to muster.

Mrs. Harrington comes over, setting her wine glass across the table from him and holds out his drink in one hand, her other hand out and palm up waiting. “The flowers.” She says as he releases his firm hold on them, one hand moving to grab the glass, afraid he is going to drop it, shattering the glass and ruining the rug. He hesitates, fingers barely grasping the glass before he gives in and hands the flowers to her, grabbing the crystal with both hands as she quirks a small smile at him.

“The way my son tells it, you’ve known each other longer.” She says holding the bouquet up to her face and taking a sniff of their fragrance as Billy chokes on his first sip of beer, hacking and coughing as it goes down the wrong pipe. She hands him a napkin

before taking a seat in the lounge across from Billy, sprawling but dignified, the bouquet in her lap as she grabs her glass of wine and takes a small sip giving Billy a questioning raised eyebrow.

“Well,” Billy licks over his lips, throat a little scratchy before he takes a sip of beer that thankfully goes down the right pipe this time. His hands clench around the glass and he forces them to relax, afraid to break the delicate looking glass, it feels solid under his palms but still the fear is there and now he is suddenly aware of how damp his palms are, afraid their slickness will leave dirty finger prints all over the glass or worse make it slip from his palms. Billy takes one more sip before lowering his hands to rest the glass in his lap where it will not fall. “I like to count from when we actually started getting to know each other.”

“So not from when you gave my son that scar?” She asks, her face an indifferent mask as Billy’s whole face crumples. He hates thinking about that, hates that he did that. He knows now what was really going on that night and even before that he knew he went too far, took an anger out on Steve that had nothing to do with Max and the lie. It is something Billy has apologized for time and time again, he doubts he will ever stop, every time his eyes find that scar he feels it crawling up his throat no matter how many times Steve brushes it off, telling him he is already forgiven.

“No ma'am” Billy gets out around the lump of shame in his throat. She hums again, taking another sip of her wine, manicured nails brushing over the little white bell flowers. There is silence in the room for a long few minutes as deep brown unreadable eyes stare him down, just the sound of gentle creaks from upstairs where Billy imagines Steve is still getting ready, never on time for anything.

“I expect no further damage to my son by your hands.” She says

simply and Billy flinches at the very idea that he would ever harm Steve again, it is a thought that haunts him some days. He will lay in bed staring up at the dingy water stained ceiling of his government funded apartment and remember Steve's bloody beaten face afraid that he will do it all over again. His therapist says it is not wise to dwell on the past but Billy cannot quite get past the thought that he could snap again, will get up in a rush and wear himself out with his punching bag to get his mind off of it. "The consequences for such a thing will be lethal."

Billy blinks pulled from his thoughts by the simple comments, something sharp and deadly in her eyes and he believes her, collar feeling far too tight again despite all of his open buttons. "I wouldn't, I... I wouldn't do that not to Steve, never again." He says, voice gaining firmness, as he speaks, becoming more sure of it, he made a promise to himself before Steve ever gave him a real smile, before even Starcourt and monsters, not to hurt him like that ever again.

"Good." She gives him a smile that is just as sharp as the look in her eyes as she sets her glass down and leans forward "Should you make that mistake, I will have to inform Steven's uncle, he doesn't take kindly to anyone hurting his only nephew." Billy gulps, Steve has mentioned his uncle a few times and though he has never outright said it Billy is pretty sure the man is into some shady business and very well connected, he understands the unspoken threat. "Do we understand each other?"

"Yes ma'am" Billy chokes out, hands tightening on the glass again, toes curling and uncurling in his sock as she keep staring him down and Billy is sure if he were a cat his hair would be standing on end as it is he has goose flesh pricking over the back of his neck. Even when she relaxes back again, hand falling to the bouquet, Billy does not feel like he can relax, he feels like he is one wrong move from winding up in the river.

“Good, I would hate for Steven to have to find someone else to complete.” She says with a laugh in her voice and another quirk of her lips as she brings the flowers up for another sniff. Billy’s eyes go wide, he had picked those flowers on purpose and he had not anticipated anyone other than him knowing the meaning, knowing what he was really saying by giving them to Steve. He might not be ready to put his feelings into words and tell Steve how much he cares, how gone he really is for him but he wanted to do something for his own piece of mine, his own secret meaning.

“My mother never told him too much about flower language, only those she grew in her garden but I believe he would be over the moon to learn what these mean coming from you.” Billy chokes again, this time on his own spit, he is not ready for him to know that, not ready for the talk that will follow because Steve likes to talk about his feelings and Billy still finds that a difficult task. Even the smallest admittance takes him weeks to work up to. “You are going to tell him at some point I hope, if you wait too long and it hurts him, well I’m sure you can guess what I’ll do.” Billy can guess that, that way also leads to a call to Steve’s uncle and Billy swimming with the fishes.

Billy drags the glass up two handed, faster than he should as it threatens to splash up over the rim but he is quick to get his mouth on it, taking a few long swigs. He slowly lowers it back down, taking the time to get his wits about him before he finally says “Working up to it.”

“Good then I expect no problems between you and my son.” She says and the sharp look lessons to more of a laughing thing as she smiles. “You can meet his uncle at the Christmas party, he’s excited to *meet* the man who Steven can’t stop gushing about.” Billy lets out a high nervous laugh, no doubt she means interrogate and he is feeling

nervous and trapped but that does not stop the affection at hearing that Steve has been talking about him to his family from bubbling up or the hope despite the fear that he will manage not to muck things up before he is invited to the Christmas party.

“I look forward to it.” He finally gets out after he quells his nervous laughter, resisting the urge to rub his slick palms on his pants, intent to keep hold of his glass rather than spill it.

Mrs. Harrington nods and stands as the stairs creak and she is moving, pressing the flowers against Billy’s chest until he grabs them before disappearing out of the room leaving Billy to his own devices and it is the first time he has gotten a full breath of air in since he got here. “You look very nice Steven, your suitor is here.” She says as the stairs give a few more creeks.

“It’s a date mom, not a marriage proposal, could you lay off of it.” Billy cannot help cracking a smile at how annoyed Steve sounds and he would bet anything that Steve has a crinkle between his brows and his hands on his hips. “How long has he been here, god you didn’t do anything embarrassing like ask his intention did you?” Just the sound of Steve whining at his mother makes the tension drain out of Billy, makes it easier for him to bring the glass up without worrying he is going to break it and ruin everything because Steve would not hold an accident like that against him.

“Of course not darling.” It is not technically a lie but it still makes Billy snort into his glass before he takes the last sip, setting it down on a coaster on the coffee table. He stands and straightens his clothes out as best he can without a mirror as Steve and his mother keep chatting, Steve worrying and fussing and her reassuring him.

Billy looks down at the bouquet in his hands, the lily of the valley he special ordered just for Steve, despite all of the handling the little bell shaped flowers are all intact and beautifully delicate. The same cannot be said for the thick waxy leaf wrapped around their stems, cracked and a little damp as the leaf weeps softly. Billy uses the napkin from earlier to wipe at it gently, looking around for a trashcan and not finding one he shoves the napkin in his back pocket just as Steve and his mother come in.

The rest of his nerves melt away as Steve smiles at him, bright and beautiful with a happy little “Are those for me?” Billy has a grin sliding across his lips, the sweat drying from his palms as he relaxes his posture and holds them out.

“I wouldn’t buy these for anyone else pretty boy.” He means more than the bouquet of course he means these specific flowers, because he has never met anyone else who even comes close to making him feel the way Steve does. Billy cannot imagine anyone else completing him, he already knows Steve is the only person he will ever give lily of the valley to. Billy holds it out to him a little spike of worry that they will be rejected, a silly one because Steve makes grabby hands at them as he moves closer.

“They’re really pretty thank you Billy.” Steve says grinning as he gets a hold of the flowers, smelling them and holding them delicately. “No one has ever gotten me flowers.”

“That’s a shame and a surprise, Wheeler seems like the type of girl who would be thoughtful like that.” Billy says, only half joking, when he first came to town he did not think much of her, maybe a touch jealous that she was dating Steve but she has grown on Billy since then and he would not be surprised if she gave Johnathan flowers.

"I don't think I would have appreciated them the same from anyone else." Steve says, looking at Billy through his lashes with something warm that has Billy's gut doing the best kinds of flips. Mrs. Harrington watches them with a much friendlier smile, no sharpness left to be found, Billy barely registers it as he only has eyes for his pretty boy.

Billy's fingers itch to get a hold on Steve, to pull him closer and as Mrs. Harrington leaves he gives into it, catches Steve by the elbow and pulls him closer. "You look really good tonight pretty boy." Now that the terror of being alone with Mrs. Harrington is in the past Billy can say that and Steve does look nice in his baby blue button up, with too many buttons for Billy's taste and khakis he hopes to see crumpled up later.

"Thanks, you look good too big guy." Steve says rewarding Billy with that killer smile and the nickname that never fails to get some heat boiling in Billy's belly. "My mom wasn't too... much was she?" Steve asks, frowning as he worries, getting that crease in his brows. Billy reaches a hand up and smooths his thumb over Steve's brow, keeping the gentle rub up until Steve gives in and softens his face closer to a smile.

"Your mom was," Billy pauses, licking over his lips, he can read the visible nerves that well up in Steve leaning in and rubbing their noses together. "She was fine, gave me a beer while we waited."

Steve grins, rubbing his nose back, tilting his face up and giving the tip of Billy's nose a tiny kiss, arms moving as he goes to point in the direction of the bar, the little soft bell shaped flowers brushing Billy's chin. "Oh what kind? I put some pabst in the bar, I know you don't

really like all that fancy shit and I know that you normally” Billy cuts Steve off with a press of his lips, just a chafed thing pulling back quickly as a throat is cleared.

“I brought a vase for your flower dear.” Mrs. Harrington says holding up a fairly simple but clearly expensive vase, Billy can tell it too is crystal, a similar delicate partner to the glass that had been in his hands not too long ago, some sort of set.

“Oh thanks mama” Steve says excitedly, already turning and out of Billy’s reach as his mother sets the vase down on the table, watching with amusement as the two of them go about undoing the bouquet and snipping the stems before arranging them in the water. Mrs. Harrington directs and second guesses every placement her son chooses, getting the huffiest little sighs but Steve still does exactly what she says. Billy just stands there quietly watching them unwilling to interrupt lest he get that sharp look from Mrs. Harrington again. “What do you think?” Steve asks, holding the vase in Billy’s direction.

“They look very nice.” Billy offers they still look like flowers to him, a little more spread out than they had been before, no longer wrapped tightly, the waxy green leaf rolled and placed into the center of the vase making the whole thing look a little fuller.

“Why don’t you put them on the bar for now darling, you can find the perfect spot for them after your date.” Mrs. Harrington pipes up from where she is lounging across the couch sipping her wine again. Billy just gives a nod, wishing he had a watch to check, if they miss their movie time they are out of luck unless they want to go to the city, Hawkins has not gotten another movie theater and the Hawk only has the two playing and Billy really does not want their first date to involve Anne of Green Gables.

Steve settles the vase on the bar before practically skipping over to his mom and giving her a kiss on the cheek with a “Don’t wait up.” She gives an amused laugh into her wine glass as Steve moves over to Billy, grabbing his hand with a wide grin. “So you’re going to let me drive the camaro right? I believe I recall an agreement to let me.”

Billy definitely did not agree to that despite Steve trying, winning smile or not Billy is not about to give in, until he catches the sharp look Mrs. Harrington shoots him as Steve starts tugging him toward the door. “Once, just this one, just to the theater and you had better not hurt my baby.” Billy says firmly Mrs. Harrington might be scary but this is Billy’s built back up from the burnt frame up car, this is a one time thing for sure.

Mrs. Harrington is outright laughing as her son makes an excited noise and Billy cannot help but feel like maybe it was worth agreeing for the excited smile he shoots him. “We’re taking the long way then” Steve announces and Billy does not have time for regret to fill him because Steve is pressing an exuberant kiss against his mouth and Billy is helplessly handing his keys over to the tinkling laughter of Steve’s mother as they put their shoes on.

-End

Author’s Note:

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